

*Mr. Blair* : Mr. Brindley wrote on the 10th September, 1884, "The rolls of lead were sent up with a small strip cut off the ends, so as to cut off weight, lengths, &c., of each sheet, evidently with the intention of misleading." This is all I have to say with reference to the defective works on the buildings, and I think it is sufficient to show that defective works exist, and, furthermore, that the Inspector was not backed up by the Architect as he ought to have been; but, as he will be here to speak for himself in a few days, I shall leave that matter at this point. I shall now sum up shortly the conclusions which must be come to from the statement that I have just made and from the evidence which will be forthcoming in support thereof: (1.) That all the building operations were absolutely under the control of Mr. Lawson as Architect, and that the Inspector of Works was absolutely and entirely under his control and direction. (2.) That all the drains required by Mr. Lawson were put in, and very many more besides, and that they have had little or no effect in stopping the damage to the building. (3.) That the damage to the building is not in consequence of a general movement of the hillside towards the sea, or from the slips that have occurred in the neighbourhood, but that it is due to irregular settlement in soft ground. (4.) That, instead of being widened over the soft ground, the foundations were actually reduced to a very serious extent, thereby increasing the risk of settlement and damage. (5.) That the foundations throughout the damaged portions of the building are all defective; that they are much smaller than shown in the contract, and that the work and material are both faulty in the extreme. As I have been unexpectedly called on to proceed first in this inquiry, I claim the right of reply and of producing any other evidence at any stage of the inquiry which I may consider necessary, or which may arise from the evidence brought in by Messrs. Lawson and Gore. This, I understand, the Commission has agreed to give.

*The Chairman* : Oh, yes! When Mr. Gore and Mr. Lawson have produced their evidence you will have an opportunity of answering it.

*Mr. Blair* : I submit a plan showing the drains that have been put in, plans of the strengthening that has been done to the foundation, and also plans of the defective foundations, showing how far they diverge from what is provided for in the contract. I also put in Mr. Brindley's letter-book and other papers, which will be laid upon the table as the inquiry proceeds. [Documents 5 and 6 (letter-book and plans) produced.] There is a point with reference to the Commission to which I have made no allusion whatever—that is, as to suggestions for making good the damage that has taken place and preventing further damage. It is not the intention of the department to give any evidence on this point, or, in fact, any expert evidence involving opinions beyond what I have already given and what appears in the papers and report. As the Commission is composed entirely of experts, the Public Works Department does not consider it necessary or right to submit any evidence of this kind. I have therefore to intimate at this early stage that no such evidence will be forthcoming beyond what appears in the papers and what I have stated here.

*Mr. Gore* : I should like to know what is the date of Dr. Grabham's report.

*Mr. Blair* : On what?

*Mr. Gore* : On the asylum building.

*Mr. Blair* : 9th June, 1880.

*Mr. Mountfort* : I should like you, Mr. Chairman, to ask Mr. Blair to what stage the works had been carried at the date of Dr. Hector's report—what had been done and what had not been done at that time.

*Mr. Lawson* : There was nothing touched.

*The Chairman* : There is some reference in the report to what work was done then.

*Mr. Gore* : There was very little done to the foundations—simply to the central block.

*Mr. Mountfort* : Here is what Dr. Hector says: "The south end of the main building will stand on formation A, as in the former case, but with a further complication of greensand, which occurs interstratified with the clay-marls, and carries water, and will require special arrangements for drainage. The north end of the building and part of the foundations of the central portions already laid are on the unstable portion C, the movement of which, owing to the shape of the under-surface, will be towards the north-east, and unless the foundations are carried through to the solid, or otherwise completely isolated from the general mass of formation C."

*The Chairman* : Yes; he refers to the northern end of the building.

*Mr. Lawson* : You are confusing things, gentlemen. It is the temporary site that Dr. Hector was referring to.

*Mr. Mountfort* : No; he says, the site of the new asylum.

*Mr. Ussher* : There was nothing done at the date of that report.

*Mr. Lawson* : There was no work done on the new building then.

*The Chairman* re-read the quotation from Dr. Hector's report.

*Mr. Lawson* : That is exactly what he means. The northern end of the foundation was not touched.

*Mr. Mountfort* : I thoroughly understand. Part of the centre foundations was laid. I want to know in what state the works were then.

*Mr. Blair* : The contract for the centre block was accepted.

*Mr. Lawson* : The contract for the three blocks was accepted then.

*The Chairman* : In June, 1880, the foundations were laid.

*Mr. Blair* : And concreted.

*The Chairman* : In the north wing?

*Mr. Blair* : No; in the central wing.

*Mr. Skinner* : At what time, Mr. Gore, did you commence operations on the site?

*Mr. Gore* : I went up there directly after the contract was signed, but I was up there for eight months doing nothing except making preparations and clearing the ground.

*The Chairman* : I see that Dr. Hector simply alludes to the foundations being laid in the central portion.